



# NEWS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

Date: January 28, 2014  
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The Montana Department of Corrections (MDOC) has introduced a major expansion of its free automated notification service for victims of the 13,000 adult felony offenders under state supervision.

Victims can register with VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) to receive phone, email, text or teletype (TTY) messages about changes in the custody status or location of any adult felony offender as he or she moves through the corrections system.

VINE began tracking the 8,400 Montana offenders on probation and parole late last year, a significant addition to a system that before tracked only those in prisons and prerelease centers – less than a third of the total offender population.

“The VINE system is critical to our victim service strategy because it helps keep victims safe,” said Sally Hilander, MDOC victim programs manager. “Victims tell us that knowing where their offenders are at the moment improves their sense of security and helps them reclaim some of the personal power the crime took away from them.” Two thousand new users registered for VINE in 2013, according to Hilander.

VINE is confidential, anonymous and secure.

The VINE expansion was made possible by technological advances in MDOC’s offender management data base, a U.S. Department of Justice grant and a 2012 state general fund appropriation.

VINE notifies victims about upcoming parole and sentence review hearings, releases from prison, transfers from prison to community supervision, changes in probation or parole locations, escapes from prison or prerelease centers, out-of-state transfers, and offender deaths. VINE delivered nearly 30,000 messages in 2013.

VINE is designed to serve direct victims of crime and their families but is also available free of charge to others who have an interest in keeping track of an adult offender under MDOC supervision. Users include law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, child support personnel, probation and parole officers, victim advocates, offender families and the media.

MDOC contracts for the VINE service with the Appriss Company in Louisville, Kentucky, which staffs a call center around the clock to assist victims. As part of the expansion, the company added text messaging notifications and a mobile app to its telephone, email and TTY choices. “The beauty of VINE is that it provides the same confidential, anonymous and reliable service to all victims, whether they prefer to

download the free mobile app onto their smart phones or dial VINE on a rotary phone and speak to an operator,” Hilander said.

To register for VINE or check the location of an offender, call (800) 456-3076, visit the website at [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com), or download the free mobile app. Android users can search Google Play with the search term “VINEMobile.” Apple users can search in the Apple App Store using the search term “VINEMobile” under “iPhone Apps.” The VINEMobile app will run on an iPad.

All but three states have a VINE system that tracks offenders in jails, prisons or both. The Montana VINE does not track juveniles, county jail inmates, or offenders in the federal corrections system.

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